

parent should be able to make a choice of any kind of school that he or she wants to send her child to.

I vigorously campaigned on this idea because I think it is right. And it's an idea that I remain strongly committed to. I don't believe the Federal Government should fund persistent failure. I think there's a role for Federal Government in funding education, but we need to do better than we've done in the past. We need to encourage accountability. And when we find success, we need to thank the teachers and principals. When we find failure, we must give parents different options—different options.

We've also submitted a plan to increase education savings accounts, to expand them from \$500 to \$5,000 a year. And parents will be able to use these funds for any educated-related expense, from kindergarten to college and beyond.

The goal of these reforms is to ensure that every child in every school receives a quality education. That's the goal. And it's time we moved beyond the old arguments and old divides to make sure that we fulfill our duty that no child in America is left behind. It is time to set aside the old partisan bickering and finger-pointing and name-calling that comes from freeing parents to make different choices for their children. We can do better in America—we can do better.

I realize that all the differences between parties and people on different sides of the choice issue will not dissolve overnight. I understand that, and so do you. But that doesn't mean we shouldn't continue to fight for good ideas and herald a philosophy that is eminently fair and hopeful and optimistic for every single child, regardless of their neighborhood or their income status.

That's what this is all about. It's really about the promise of America, what America should be about. And that's providing hope and opportunity for every single citizen, regardless of where you're from. There are some encouraging signs; there are. Slowly but surely, people are beginning to understand the logic behind accountability, the understanding that we can't accept failure, the need to trust individuals to make right decisions for their children. Slowly but surely,

people are hearing that message. And I want to thank you for your help.

I have come to realize that ordinary folks can have a big influence on the process in Washington, DC, that ours is a responsive democracy, and that you're only one e-mail away—[laughter]—from telling somebody how you think. And it's helpful—it's helpful. We're doing the right thing. We're doing the right thing for our country.

I believe we can get positive results out of the Congress. I believe we can make progress toward reforming a system that is working in some places and not working in others. I know we can have quality education for every child. And when we do, this great land of ours—by the way, the greatest Nation on the face of the Earth—will be even greater. We'll be even greater.

Thank you for coming, and God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:35 a.m. in Presidential Hall at the Dwight D. Eisenhower Executive Office Building. In his remarks, he referred to former Representative Rev. Floyd H. Flake, senior pastor, Cathedral of the Allen A.M.E. Church in Jamaica, New York. The President also referred to Title I of the Improving America's Schools Act of 1994 (Public Law No. 103-382), which amended Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 (Public Law No. 89-10).

Remarks on Signing a Proclamation Commemorating the Birth of Thomas Jefferson

April 12, 2001

Good afternoon. Welcome. Welcome back, Thomas. [Laughter] Senator Warner and Senator Allen, it's good to see both. Congressman Goode, welcome. The first lady of the Commonwealth of Virginia, it's good to see you again. And I want to thank all the descendants of Thomas Jefferson who are here. I want to thank the Jefferson scholars who are here. I want to thank my fellow Americans who are here. Welcome to the White House.

As the White House's latest tenant, it is my pleasure to say, welcome back, Thomas Jefferson. Most people don't realize this, but Thomas Jefferson and I share a hobby: we

both like to make up words. [*Laughter*] According to the Oxford English Dictionary, Mr. Jefferson contributed more new words to the language than any other U.S. President. I especially like his term for barbaric pirates: *barbaresques*. [*Laughter*] I'm also impressed by his words: *debarrass* and *graffage*.

The other day I tried a new word for our press corps: *misunderestimate*. [*Laughter*] It's not quite in Jefferson's league, but I am giving it my best shot. [*Laughter*]

As you know, I've been trying to reduce taxes. Thomas Jefferson and I agree here, as well. He warned that government must expend the public money with the same care and economy we would practice with our own and impose on our own citizens no unnecessary burdens. That's something for all of us to think about, especially Members of the House and the Senate. [*Laughter*]

Jefferson can be quoted by the hour. He lived a long time ago, yet he still speaks directly to the present. Few former Presidents survive more vividly in our memories. And we feel his presence especially strongly in this place.

This is the room where Jefferson's Secretary, as Mr. Jefferson accurately pointed out, Meriwether Lewis, had his office in his bedroom, right here in this room. And it was here he embarked on his great expedition to the Pacific.

In this house, Jefferson famously wore his carpet slippers to receive the British King's Ambassador. In the Green Room, he delighted his guests with his insights into science and philosophy and law—any subject, except what Jefferson called the hated occupation of politics.

Jefferson holds the American imagination because he articulated the American creed. We declared our independence with his words that all men are created equal and that they are endowed by their creator with unalienable rights. Jefferson is the poet laureate of American freedom.

Our world echoes with Jefferson's ideals, even though Jefferson did not always act as if they were true. The same Thomas Jefferson who wrote the original ordinance banning slavery in the Northwest Territories lived on the labor of slaves. The same

Jefferson who denied racial equality spoke ringing words of equal rights. He doubted the existence of the Christian God, but he trembled for his country when he remembered that the God he doubted was just.

No wonder America sees itself in Thomas Jefferson. He was what we are: marked with faults, inspired by strong ideals. Thomas Jefferson still inspires us. He believed that education was the key to human potential. We must be committed to educating every single child in America.

His Louisiana Purchase threw open the opportunities of this vast country, and we must dedicate ourselves to extending opportunity wider and wider. Above all, Jefferson believed in liberty, in the ability of citizens to govern their own country and govern their own lives. We must always affirm this democratic faith.

Like many great men, Thomas Jefferson leaves behind a complex legacy. Tomorrow would have been his 258th birthday. On his 358th birthday, Americans will still be debating his achievements and his faults, his words and his deeds.

Perhaps the best verdict came from one of Jefferson's keenest admirers and sharpest critics, the first Republican President, Abraham Lincoln.

Lincoln was invited in 1859 to come to Boston to speak at a Jefferson birthday event in that city. He was unable to attend and so he put his thoughts in a letter. At that time, Jefferson was a contentious name in American politics. His memory had been hijacked by slaveholders who distorted many of his deeds and most of his words. But Lincoln saw further and deeper.

When the view beyond the south window was swamp and the stump of the Washington Monument, when there were no cherry blossoms, no Jefferson Memorial, no Monticello on the nickel, and no Jefferson Building for the Library of Congress, Lincoln could still see the enduring meaning of Thomas Jefferson in American and world history. Here is what he wrote:

All honor to Jefferson, to the man who in the concrete pressure of a struggle for

national independence by a single people had the coolness, forecast, and capacity to introduce into a merely revolutionary document an abstract truth, applicable to all men and at all times. And so, to embalm it there, that today and in all coming days it shall be a rebuke and a stumbling block to the very harbingers of a reappearing tyranny and oppression.

Happy birthday, Mr. Jefferson.

And now I am honored to sign a proclamation celebrating Thomas Jefferson's birth and his continuing influence on our great land.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:30 p.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Roxane Gilmore, wife of Gov. James S. Gilmore III of Virginia.

Proclamation 7426—Thomas Jefferson Day, 2001

April 12, 2001

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Our Nation's Founding Fathers overcame enormous obstacles to establish a system of government unequaled in history. We are the beneficiaries of their sacrifice, courage, and honor. But among these legendary patriots, Thomas Jefferson remains unique as the one who articulated the essential values and principles of American liberty and freedom. Today, we gather here to celebrate the birthday of Thomas Jefferson and to reflect on his enduring contributions to the United States and the world.

Few Americans have shaped our collective destiny as thoroughly and as originally as Thomas Jefferson. His achievements are breathtaking in their scope and diversity. Beyond his achievements in public life as Governor of Virginia, author of the Statute of Virginia for Religious Freedom, Secretary of State, third President of the United States, and founder of the University of Virginia, Jefferson was a scholar, author, naturalist, inventor, bibliophile, and architect.

As President, Jefferson supported the Lewis and Clark expedition and concluded

the \$15 million purchase of the Louisiana Territory from France. He sold his personal library to the Library of Congress to replace its collection destroyed by the British in the War of 1812.

Thomas Jefferson's crowning achievement, however, was the Declaration of Independence. As its primary author, Jefferson drafted an immortal document that altered the way the world viewed the relationship between government and the governed. Jefferson's assertion of "inalienable rights" including "life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness" established the democratic standard by which our Nation would measure itself. Many other nations and peoples likewise strive to measure up to the standard set forth in the Declaration of Independence.

Thomas Jefferson's words are as thrilling and inspiring in 2001 as they must have been to his revolutionary allies in 1776. Our Nation has changed, our technology has progressed, but our basic love for liberty and freedom remains the same. As proud Americans, we must work together to maintain the vigor and strength of Jefferson's vision and to fulfill its promise of a better life for all our citizens. Doing this is our responsibility, and our gift, to the man who laid the foundation for what became the freest nation in the world.

Now, Therefore, I, George W. Bush, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim April 13, 2001, as Thomas Jefferson Day. I encourage all Americans to join in this celebration of Thomas Jefferson's achievements, and to learn more about his unique influence on our history, traditions, and values.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this twelfth day of April, in the year of our Lord two thousand one, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fifth.

George W. Bush

[Filed with the Office of the Federal Register, 8:45 a.m., April 16, 2001]

NOTE: This proclamation will be published in the *Federal Register* on April 17.